

Good evening commission members:

My name is Sharon Dooley. I live in Council District 2 and am speaking tonight as a former President of the Greater Olney Civic Association – commonly known as GOCA. GOCA represents more than 30 Homeowners Associations from our area and has asked me to speak tonight.

Olney is now a satellite community but historically was a pass through town tucked among farms located along a toll road. When I first came to this area more than 30 years ago, dairies, hatcheries and a blacksmith shop dominated the neighborhoods along Georgia Avenue – then only 2 lanes. Cows and corn dotted the farms along route 108. We are only a few miles from the Howard County line and ten miles above either end of the Metro Red Line.

The Olney area, with close to 50,000 registered voters located in 13 precincts divided among 2 council districts, currently is an unincorporated community which shares 2 Council Districts – both 2 and 4; and two Legislative Districts – 14 and 19. This original arrangement came about in the last redistricting and we, as a community have come to appreciate this unique opportunity for representation. We may now call upon two council persons to help us resolve community concerns as well as eight elected officials to serve our interests in Annapolis. So while our community is divided on paper, we are united in our desire for some stability in our redistricting. We have an intact community.

In 2000 the entire District had 42 Precincts – some were very large in size and reflected the rural open areas in the Agricultural Reserve with few people, while others were walkable precincts denoting the urban density seen in Germantown, Damascus, Montgomery Village and Olney.

Poolesville – a municipality which has a town council - also is included in District 2.

Currently the District has grown to be the largest not only in size, but also in population in the County and includes some 52 precincts. Much of the increase has been seen north of Germantown in the newly expanded town of Clarksburg which has gained more than 10,000 residents and in the far west in Poolesville which has expanded in the last decade. I, as a Precinct coordinator worked to create Olney's newest Precinct – that of 8-13, which came into being in the 2008 election and drew from Precinct 8-11 (where I vote) dividing the area into two more manageable sized precincts. Changing these precincts yet again would surely confuse many residents of Olney.

We all know that District 2 will see some District changes. Currently District 2 and the Olney community reflect the diversity of the county as a whole with many cultures and ethnicities represented. The Olney community asks that you consider the fact that we saw major District changes in 1990 as well as in 2000, so we need no more surprises on Election Day. One certain way to decrease voter turnout is constant changing of precincts, voting places and representation.

I respectfully request that you allow Olney to keep the alignment we currently have and allow Council Districts 2 and 4 to settle in, and permit their boundaries to mature, while our elected officials continue to work in concert for the benefit of all residents.